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ABSTRACT

This paper presents findings of an assessment of the effect of recent educational reforms on low achieving and minority students in South Carolina. Despite criticism that the recent reforms would be harmful to these students because of higher standards and testing programs, it is reported that the achievement of black students and low-achieving students of all races was not blocked by the many reforms in South Carolina. First, the report presents an overview of recent educational reforms. The South Carolina Education Finance Act of 1977, an attempt to provide a more equalized school finance system, is described. The Basic Skills Assessment Program (1978), State efforts to increase kindergarten attendance of children from hard-to-reach families (1979), the Educator Improvement Act (1979), and grassroots reform efforts (1983) are also discussed. Next, the report describes the study procedure and presents basic findings. These include the following: (1) low achieving, black, and all students have made substantial progress since educational reforms have been in process; (2) the achievement of black high achieving students and all high achieving students was not "pulled down" by reforms; (3) achievement gains in basic skills were found in all groups across a sample of grades; (4) the percentage of all children entering first grade with suitable readiness skills has increased substantially since 1979. These results are promising, but they are based on early evidence and the results of the reform movement will require further monitoring. (KH)

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THE IMPACT OF RECENT EDUCATIONAL REFORMS ON MINORITY AND ALL LOW ACHIEVING STUDENTS AND ON MINORITY AND ALL HIGH ACHIEVING STUDENTS

POSITIVE EARLY INDICATIONS FROM SOUTH CAROLINA

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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ABSTRACT

One of the criticisms of the recent educational reforms sweeping the nation is that low achieving and minority students will not be helped by the reforms. The reforms, some contend, will be harmful to low achieving and minority students because the higher standards and testing programs, which are typically included in the reforms, may actually create new barriers blocking at-risk student progress. This investigation studied this contention in one state, South Carolina, which has been rich in educational reforms. Early evidence from this state indicates that the achievement of Black students and low achieving students of all races was not blocked by the reforms in South Carolina. In fact, low achieving students, Black and all students, made substantial progress in South Carolina since a combination of educational reforms have been in process.

Also, some have criticized the recent reform movement for inhibiting the progress of higher achieving students regardless of race. They argue that higher standards and testing programs which are typically included as the main initiatives of reforms are targeted at average or below-average students, and such initiatives "pull down" the higher students to the average. This investigation studied this contention in South Carolina not only for all high achieving students, but also for Black high

achieving students. Early evidence from this state indicates that achievement of Black high achieving students and all high achieving students was not "pulled down" by the recent reforms in South Carolina. In fact, the percent of high achieving students increased among Black students and all students, regardless of race.

The achievement gains in basic skills among Black students and all students were found across a sample of grades (4th,8th and 10th) in South Carolina. In addition, the gains were on two types of achievement tests, a norm-referenced test and a state criterion-referenced test.

Furthermore, the investigation found that in South Carolina the percentage of children, Black and all children, entering first grade with suitable readiness skills for first grade work has increased substantially since 1979. Therefore, if the improvements in curricula and instructions can be maintained throughout the grades in South Carolina the first grade students of 1985-86 should greatly exceed the performance of the other students in this investigation (the 4th, 8th and 10th grade students) when they reach these higher grades. If this happens, South Carolina will have made "a quantum leap" in educational improvement for which it had aspired through its multi-faceted reforms.

South Carolina has taken a much more comprehensive approach to educational reform than most states. However, blanket criticism of all state reform efforts as having a negative impact on minority, low achieving and high achieving students is not supported by this investigation. In fact, this investigation shows very positive results for these types of students. The results of the reform movement must be studied and monitored in relation to the specific set of initiatives taken.

For the reforms in South Carolina to continue to deliver outstanding results, the expectations, curricula and instruction must keep pace with the advancements of Black and all students while at the same time maintaining the extra help and special initiatives for students who may be at risk of not meeting the new standards.

BACKGROUND

Introduction

Nationally, there has been some concern expressed that the educational reforms sweeping the nation in the late 1970's and in the 1980's may have an adverse effect on children at-risk. The concerns have been particularly raised regarding the reforms on minority children. The impact of the reforms on minority children can now only start to be evaluated on any large scale because of the time lag between the discussion, passage, and implementation of the most recent reforms and the availability of assessment data.

Many states, school districts and individual schools took very different approaches to the call for educational reform in the late 1970's and 1980's. Therefore, in evaluating the impact of reforms in general and even more specifically for minority and at-risk children, it is important to analyze the types of reforms initiated and together with assessment data. South Carolina is a good candidate for such an evaluation because it has been very active in educational reform and also has substantial baseline data.

Since 1977, South Carolina has been attempting to make substantial improvements in her public elementary and secondary schools. Although the educational reforms initiated were designed to help all students improve, a number of special initiatives have been taken to help children who often are at-risk of experiencing problems in the schools (i.e., low-income, minorities, disadvantaged and handicapped).

The first section of this paper will describe the reforms recently enacted in South Carolina and the special initiatives to help at-risk children. The second section of this investigation will discuss the possible results of the reforms on low achieving and high achieving minority children, and specifically Black children in South Carolina. Black children make up almost 40% of the State's public school enrollment. The final section of this investigation will offer several conclusions and implications.

Summary of Recent Educational Reforms in South Carolina

The first major educational reform to be enacted in South Carolina during this latest national wave of reform was a school finance and equalization law. After two years of grassroots efforts involving a coalition of groups (i.e., League of Women Voters, South Carolina Education Association, State Chamber of Commerce, South Carolina Community Relations Program, NAACP and others) and technical assistance from a number of organizations

(i.e., Southern Education Foundation and National Conference of State Legislatures), South Carolina enacted the South Carolina Education Finance Act of 1977.

The South Carolina Education Finance Act was designed to:

1. Provide a more equalized school finance system in South Carolina by using a portion of new state funds to compensate property-poor school districts, many of which have a majority-black population, for the lack of ability to raise local revenue and by requiring all districts (particularly a few majority-black districts) to maintain a minimum local financial effort for the public schools adjusted annually for inflation and property wealth.

2. Provide new funds over a five year phase-in (1978-83) to all districts for improved resources in the schools such as:
   a. Reduction in class size in grades 1-3 in reading and math from 30 to 1 to 21 to 1;
   b. Provision of certified music, art and physical education teachers in elementary schools;
   c. Expansion of all handicapped programs;
   d. Expansion of vocational programs;
   e. Assurance of at least a state minimum teacher salary schedule adjusted for inflation; and,

f. Increased accountability at the school and district levels.

The South Carolina Education Finance Act was one of the few finance and equalization acts passed in the country which was not forced by litigation nor facilitated by huge state surpluses.

The passage of the finance reform was followed in 1978 with another reform, the Basic Skills Assessment Program. This program focuses on basic skills testing and instruction from entry into first grade through high school. Reading, math and writing were the basic skills originally included in the program. Two special features of the program are a requirement that parents must be notified of the results of the students and that teachers and the schools must address specific student deficiencies noted by the tests. By 1983, the Basic Skills Assessment Program was fully operational. This program is monitored by a broad based citizens and educator advisory committee.

In 1979, two additional reforms passed in South Carolina. One of the 1979 reforms dealt with increasing kindergarten attendance particularly for hard-to-reach families. This provision reduced the mandatory school age from 7 to 6 and made kindergarten and transportation to kindergarten mandatory available on request. These changes in law were accompanied by

additional funds for child development programs for 3, 4 and 5 year olds and the expansion of parenting programs. In addition, an interagency early childhood committee under the Governor's Office was formed and charged with improving educational development services for young children, particularly at-risk children.

The other reform passed in 1979 was the Educator Improvement Act which drastically modified the standards for becoming a fully certified and employed teacher in South Carolina. Under this Act new teachers must pass a basic skills exam prior to entering a teacher education program, practice teach for one full semester with much greater evaluation than previously required, pass a subject matter exam upon graduation, and receive seven successful performance evaluations in the first 3 or 4 years of teaching before receiving a full teaching contract.

Working out the details of all the reforms passed in South Carolina since 1977 and securing the funding for the phase-in of the reforms occupied most education advocates and policy makers at the state level through 1982. In 1982, immediately after the reelections of Governor Richard W. Riley and State Superintendent Charlie Williams, Riley and Williams started exploring various options, separately initially and then later together, as they said, "to make a quantum leap forward" in education in South Carolina building on the earlier education reforms. From the

beginning their efforts, combined with the national publicity on education reforms in 1982 and 1983, stirred a responsive cord, and South Carolina launched a massive educational renewal effort, some say revival, starting in the summer of 1983.

To understand this latest reform in South Carolina one has to realize it had two very important components:

1. A grassroots, bottoms-up, reform effort starting in the summer of 1983; and,

2. The passage of a massive piece of education improvement legislation, the South Carolina Educational Improvement Act of 1984, and earmarked funding for the improvements.

The grassroots effort for educational reform, which in a few South Carolina communities was moving forward on its own, was greatly enhanced in these and other communities by a series of activities coordinated out of the Governor's Office and the State Superintendent's Office. These efforts were actively supported by all the major education associations and assisted by two blue-ribbon committees of 61 state leaders in business, education and the legislature. The grassroots activities included:

1. The release of a public opinion poll in August 1983 highlighting the public's concern and support for major educational reforms in South Carolina;

2. Well-publicized visits in September and early October 1983, to every county in South Carolina by state leaders to visit schools and speak to meetings of PTA's, educators, civic leaders, chambers of commerces, and the media about the needs in public education in South Carolina;

3. Regional public forums attended by 13,000 people in September and early October 1983, to study the needs of public education and to propose solutions in small group discussion;

4. Weekly coverage in the press from August to November 1983 of meetings of the blue-ribbon committees' deliberations on the needs and possible initiatives to address the needs in education;

5. Formation of lobbying teams for educational reforms in every county;

6. Activation of a toll-free hot line on educational reform;

7. Formation of a speakers bureau on educational improvement; and,

8. Launching of a privately paid media campaign on educational improvement kicked off by a 30 minute special address to the public by the Governor on all maior commercial television channels in South Carolina.

The grassroots involvement created in the late summer and fall of 1983 translated not only into local excitement for educational improvement, but also into public support for the South Carolina Education Improvement Act of 1984. The Act was also accompanied by earmarked funding, which consisted of a one, cent sales tax increase dedicated to a special Education Improvement Act, in addition to a 6 percent increase in the regular State appropriation for elementary and secondary education. The South Carolina Education Improvement Act has 61 new or expanded initiatives designed to affect all types of students, all grades (from at-risk students to gifted and talented), all members of the education community (teachers, principals, and superintendents), and the broad school community (parents and businesses).

The South Carolina Education Improvement Act consists of higher standards as is the case in many states, but unlike many states, it provides extra help to meet those standards. The act and funding will provide child development programs for any at-risk four year olds. All children are now required to attend kindergarten. Any student below basic skills standards in grades

1-9 is provided extra help through remedial or compensatory programs. As funds become available students in grades 10-12 will also be served. South Carolina's state funded program is larger than the Federal Chapter I remedial and compensatory program in the State. Additional funding is provided to expand services to emotionally handicapped children and for alcohol and drug aversion initiatives for at-risk youth. New requirements on attendance and for parental notification on student absenteeism are also part of the law.

Questions in Investigation

Evaluating the impact of the individual educational reform efforts in South Carolina is virtually impossible because of the overlap of the actual implementation and funding of many of the reforms. Even now in 1986, it is too early to determine the long-term effects. However, analyses based on longitudinal trends can provide some early insights into the possible impact of the collective educational reforms in South Carolina for all students and specifically Black students. Two time periods provide opportunities to make these longitudinal comparisons. For early childhood programs, comparing first grade readiness scores from 1979 (prior to the reform thrusts relative to early childhood education) against 1985 and thereafter can provide a useful evaluation. In addition, comparing 1983 achievement results (prior to full implementation of the early reforms and

before the latest reforms started) against 1985 and thereafter can provide another useful evaluation.

In light of the concerns raised about the recent educational reforms on at-risk or minority children, one measure of success or failure of the reforms could be the degree to which the percentage of all children and in particular minority children, such as Black children, in the lower quartile of achievement scores changes as the reforms are implemented. In other words, if the reforms are creating new barriers instead of opportunities, then the percentage of all children and in particular minority children, such as Black children, in the lower quartile of achievement scores would probably remain constant or increase. If there is improvement, the percentage of minority children in the lower quartile would decrease over time, and the improvement would compare favorably to all children.

Another measure of the success or failure of the reforms could be the degree to which the percentage of all children and in particular minority children, such as Black children, in the upper quartile of achievement scores changes as the reforms are implemented. In other words, if the reforms are creating new barriers or "pull down" the best students to the average of the new standards, as some contend the reforms do, then the percentage of all children and in particular minority children, such as Black children, in the upper quartile of achievement

scores would probably remain constant or decrease. If there is improvement, the percentage of minority children in the upper quartile would increase over time, and the improvement would compare favorably to all children.

A third measure of the success of the reforms could be the degree to which the percentage of all children and in particular minority children, such as Black children, in the early childhood education area are considered ready to do typical first grade work as the reforms are implemented. In other words, if the early childhood reforms are not successful, then the percentage of all children and in particular minority children, such as Black children, ready to do typical first grade work would remain constant. If there is improvement, the percentage of minority children ready for first grade would increase over time, and the improvement would compare favorably to all children.

In addition to South Carolina being a state rich in educational reforms to investigate, its data base is very conducive to the type of investigation necessary to address the questions posed about the impact of educational reforms on all children and in particular minority children, such as Black children.

South Carolina adopted a new form of the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills in 1983, the year before almost all of the early

reforms were fully implemented and the year before the new package of reforms was developed with large-scale grassroots involvement. [1] The State also has its own basic skills testing program, the South Carolina Basic Skills Assessment Program. [2] It was in place fully in selected grades by 1983. In addition the Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery, a test of first grade readiness, was in place in 1979 when the early preschool initiatives began. [3]

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[1] The Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) allows the performance of students in South Carolina to be compared to that of a national sample of students. Students in South Carolina are tested statewide in grades 4, 5, 7, and 10.

[2] The Basic Skills Assessment Program (BSAP) is designed to measure a student's mastery of certain skills against a state standard for a particular grade. The skill objectives on which the tests are based reflect the views of South Carolina educators concerning desired learning outcomes at each grade. Students in South Carolina are tested statewide in grades 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, and 11.

[3] The Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery (CSAB) is used to determine a first grade student's "readiness" for first grade work. Since readiness is developmental in nature, not all of the state's first grades will test as "ready." Factors such as age, motor development, and home environment affect an individual's "readiness."

This paper addresses three broad questions relative to the impact of the South Carolina reforms on all children and Black children:

1. Are all students and in particular Black students learning more as demonstrated by the percentage of students moving out of the lower quartile of achievement scores?

2. Are all students and in particular Black students learning more as demonstrated by the percentage of students moving into the upper quartile of achievement scores?

3. Are all students and in particular Black students entering first grade more prepared than earlier?

FINDINGS OF INVESTIGATION

Findings Relative to Question #1-An Analysis of the Change of the Distribution of Students in the Lower Quartile

What follows are the findings from this investigation in a range of grades using data from various testing programs in South Carolina. First, the change of distribution of students in the

lower quartile on the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills (Form U,1981 norms) in the tenth grade and fourth grade will be discussed. Next, the change in distribution of students in the lower quartile on the reading and math tests of the South Carolina Basic Skills Assessment Programs (1983 norms) in the eighth grade will be discussed.

Tenth Grade

The percentage of tenth grade Black students and All students scoring in the lower quartile on the Total Battery of the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills experienced a major reduction between 1985 and 1983 in both relative and absolute percentages. See Table 1 for more details.

The absolute percentage reduction of Black students scoring in the lower quartile was greater than the reduction for All students while the relative percentage reduction of Black students in the lower quartile was less than the reduction for All students.

TABLE 1

South Carolina Distribution of National Quartile on Total Battery CTBS

Tenth Grade Lower Quartile

	Black	All
1983	66% (10,947)	39% (16,083)
1985	49 (7,463)	27 (10,688)
Improvement		
Absolute%	+17	+12
Relative%	+26	+31

Fourth Grade

In 1985 the percentage of fourth grade Black and All students scoring in the lower quartile on the Total Battery of the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills was substantially less than in 1983 in both relative and absolute percentages. See Table 2 for more details.

TABLE 2

South Carolina Distribution of National Quartile on Total Battery CTBS

Fourth Grade Lower Quartile

	Black	All
1983	43% (7,536)	28% (12,396)
1985	27 (4,601)	17 (7,143)
Improvement		
Absolute%	+16	+11
Relative%	+37	+39

The absolute percentage reduction of black students scoring in the lower quartile was greater than the reduction for All students while the relative percentage reduction of Black students in the lower quartile was less than the reduction for All students.

Eighth Grade

In 1985, the percentage of eighth grade Black and All students scoring in the lower quartile on the Reading and Math tests of the South Carolina Basic Skills Assessment Program was

less than in 1983 in both relative and absolute percentages. The improvement in reading was less than math for both groups of eighth grade students. See Table 3 for more details.

TABLE 3

Distribution of Student on South Carolina Basic Skills Assessment Program

	Reading Eighth Grade Lower Quartile		Math Eighth Grade Lower Quartile	
	Black	All	Black	All
1983	40% (7,153)	24% (11,198)	39% (7,126)	26% (12,079)
1985	36 (6,787)	22 (10,590)	30 (5,726)	18 (8,702)
	Improvement			
	In Absolute%			
	+4	+2	+9	+8
	In Relative%			
	+10	+8	+23	+31

The absolute percentage reduction of Black students scoring in the lower quartile in both Reading and Math was slightly greater than the reduction for All students while the relative percentage reduction of Black students in the lower quartile was slightly greater in Reading but less in Math than the reduction for All students.

Findings Relative to Questions #2-An Analysis of the Change of Distribution of Students in the Upper Quartile

Tenth Grade

In 1985 the percentage of tenth grade Black and all students scoring in the upper quartile on the Total Battery of the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills was greater than in 1983 in terms of relative and absolute percentages. See Table 4 for more details.

TABLE 4

State Distribution of National Quartile Total Battery CTBS

Tenth Grade Upper Quartile

	Black	All
1983	5% (847)	22% (9,139)
1985	10 (1,505)	31 (12,333)

Improvement

Absolute%	
+5	+9
Relative%	
+100	+41

The relative percentage increase of Black students scoring in the upper quartile was greater than the increase for All students, while the absolute percentage increase of Black students in the upper quartile was less than the increase for All students.

Fourth Grade

The percentage of fourth grade Black and All students scoring in the upper quartile on the Total Battery of the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills was substantially greater in 1985 than in 1983 in terms of relative and absolute percentages. See Table 5 for more details.

TABLE 5

South Carolina Distribution of National Quartile on Total Battery CTBS

	Fourth Grade Upper Quartile	
	Black	All
1983		
	7% (1,212)	20% (8,676)
1985		
	13 (2,611)	29 (12,301)
	Improvement	
	Absolute%	
	+6	+9
	Relative%	
	+86	+45

The relative percentage increase of Black students scoring in the upper quartile was greater than the increase for All students, while the absolute percentage increase of Black

students in the upper quartile was less than the increase for All students.

Eighth Grade

In 1985 the percentage of eighth grade Black and All students scoring in the upper quartile Reading and Math tests of the Basic Skills Assessment Program was substantially greater than in 1983 in terms of relative and absolute percentages. See Table 6 for more details.

TABLE 6

Distribution of Students on South Carolina Basic Skills Assessment Program

	Reading Eighth Grade Upper Quartile		Math Eighth Grade Upper Quartile	
	Black	All	Black	All
1983	7% (1,301)	22% (10,128)	7% (1.301)	24% (10,948)
1985	13 (2,553)	32 (15,532)	16 (2,945)	34 (16,723)
	Improvement In Absolute%			
	+6	+10	+9	+10
	In Relative%			
	+86	+45	+129	+42

The relative percentage increase of Black students scoring in the upper quartile was greater than the increase for All students, while the absolute percentage increase of Black students in the upper quartile was less than the increase for All students.

Findings Relative to Question #3 - Analysis of the Change in Readiness of Entering First Grade Students

The percentage of Black children entering first grade with readiness skills probably adequate to handle beginning first grade work has increased substantially from 1979 to 1985.

This improvement in percentage of Black children meeting the readiness standard is even more important because of the increasing entering enrollment of minority children nationwide and in South Carolina of Black Children. In 1979, 9,398 Black entering first grade students meet the Readiness Standard, but this jumped to 15,070 in 1985, a 60 percent relative increase in the number of students "Ready." See Table 7 for more details.

TABLE 7

Percentage of Entering First Grade Students in South Carolina Scoring "Ready" by Racial Category 1979 vs. 1985

	Black Children	All Children
1979	45% (9,398)	60% (29,115)
1985	63 (15,070)	74 (39,086)
	Improvement	
	In Absolute%	
	+18	+14
	In Relative%	
	+40	+23

All children, regardless of race, also made substantial progress in meeting the readiness standards. Although the percentage of All children "Ready" exceeded Black children, Black children's gains in readiness exceeded All children gains in terms of both absolute and relative percentage.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Concerns raised about possible negative consequences of the recent educational reforms on minority children, such as Black children, are not substantiated by this investigation of educational reforms in South Carolina. In fact, this investigation found that Black students and all students in South Carolina made substantial progress since their educational reforms have been implemented.

Naturally, it is very difficult to assess cause and effect of educational progress or decline and to assess the impact of individual reforms in the context of multiple reforms in a non-controlled environment. However, between 1983 and 1985, Black students and all students in South Carolina in a range of grade levels made substantial progress in moving out of the lower quartile. Furthermore, between 1983 and 1985, Black students and all students in South Carolina in a range of grade levels made substantial progress in moving into the upper quartile on basic skills tests. In addition, between 1979 and 1985, Black Students and All students entering first grade in South Carolina improved their readiness skills. The results from the study would seem to indicate that, at least initially, low and high achieving Black students and all students in South Carolina have benefitted substantially from the recent reform efforts in that State.

Compared to previous trends in achievement gains in South Carolina, the annual improvements since the reforms have been enacted are much larger (See Appendix A). Therefore, it would reasonable to conclude that the package of educational reforms with the accompanving excitement must have contributed to the gains.

Although almost all states enacting major reforms have raised student standards for either promotion, graduation or entrance into college, many of the the reforms in a number of states do not contain significant initiatives to help at-risk children or youth. South Carolina's series of reforms do contain a number of special initiatives to provide extra help to children and youth who may be at risk of not meeting the higher standards. Therefore, the results of this investigation may not be able to be generalized to other states which have enacted major education reforms.

On the other hand, blanket criticisms of all of the recent educational reform efforts as being detrimental to minority or Black students or at-risk students is not supported by this investigation. In fact, the reforms in South Carolina and, possibly in other states, have apparently greatly enhanced Black and all student achievement.

To be mindful of the impact of recent educational reforms on minority students, low-achievers and at-risk students is entirely appropriate. Many of these students have traditionally experienced more difficulty in the typical school setting than other students. Therefore, the effect of the reforms on these students is important to monitor. Generally, these concerns are expressed regarding low-achievers only. In this investigation low achievers or at-risk students were defined as students scoring in the lower quartile. As stated earlier, this investigation found that educational reforms, at least in one state, South Carolina, probably contributed to substantial achievement improvement of Black students and all students who previously had scored in the lower quartile. It is important to be concerned about students still remaining in the lower quartile, but at the same time, however, being only concerned about the lower quartile is probably too narrow of a focus.

Many Black students and low-income students do not and probably have never scored in the lower quartile. What is the impact of reforms on Black students on the high end of the spectrum of achievement, the upper quartile? The study found marked improvement in South Carolina in Black and all students moving up into the upper quartile. However, the progress for these students was not quite as substantial as for students who started in the lower quartile. An implication from this study is that advocate groups and educators must be careful about focusing

the public's attention only on the lower quartile to the possible exclusion of Black and low-income at the upper quartile. Concern and monitoring of progress seem appropriate for all types of students.

In 1983, when the Class of 1985 was in the tenth grade in South Carolina, 66% of the Black students scored in the lower quartile of achievement and 39% of all students scored in the lower quartile. In 1985, when the Class of 1987 was in the tenth grade in South Carolina, 49% of Black students scored in the lower quartile of achievement, and 27% of all students scored in the lower quartile, a dramatic improvement from 1983. Although much work needs to continue to be done in this area the progress is most encouraging. In 1985, when the Class of 1993 was in the fourth grade in South Carolina, only 27% of Black Students scored in the lower quartile of achievement. If the Class of 1993 can make significant progress from year to year and thereby hold their relative level of achievement, when they reach the tenth grade, they will have made a quantum leap in improvement over their peers in the class of 1985.

This dramatic improvement or potential for improvement has tremendous implications for curricular and instructional change for classes and schools in South Carolina and possibly in other states as well.

In 1983, many tenth grade classes composed of large numbers of students regardless of race scoring in the lower quartile and or large numbers of Black students would have, for the most part, been functioning in the lower quartile or far below grade level to match their basic skill scores. However, if the Class of 1993 maintains their skill level from the fourth grade into upper elementary, middle school and junior and senior high school, the clear majority of these students will not be functioning in the lower quartile. The curricula and instruction will need to keep pace with the improved level of skills among students entering each grade or the early progress may be stalled.

A similar trend of improvement for younger children in South Carolina is also revealed by this investigation. Just as the Class of 1993 has the potential to exceed the Class of 1983 if they can maintain their relative achievement starting from fourth grade through high school, the Class of 1997 can exceed the class of 1993 if they can convert their higher first grade readiness to achievement gains from primary school through high school. The Class of 1997's first grade readiness scores were much higher than the Class of 1993's readiness scores. Therefore the potential for increased achievement between the Class of 1983 and Class of 1993 can be extended to the Class of 1997.

For this massive potential improvement in skill level from 1983 to 1997 to be accomplished for high school students,

curricula and instruction will have to be strengthened, including the teaching of higher level skills, in upper elementary, middle school, junior and senior high schools and in particular schools which in 1983 had large numbers of students (regardless of race) scoring in the lower quartile or large numbers of Black students. If this is accomplished the fourth graders of 1985, the Class of 1993, face a much brighter future than their peers of 1983, and the first graders of 1986, the Class of 1997 have a brighter future than the class of 1993. Certainly this investigation indicates that at least one state is moving in the right direction in educational reform.

The new educational reform movement offers many new challenges and, if it is suecessful, new opportunities for minority and at-risk children and youth. Careful monitoring of the reforms is very important to assure the early signs of progress are maintained. Expectations, curricula and instruction will have to be improved if the early gains in achievement are to be maintained.

APPENDIX A

SOUTH CAROLINA'S COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATIONAL REFORM EFFORT IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE - A BIG POSITIVE DIFFERENCE!!

Future Potential For High School Student Is Much Brighter

*Basic skill scores have increased 3 to 5 times over earlier gains.

*Academic skills scores have increased 5 to 10 times over earlier annual gains.

*Writing composition skills have improved dramatically.

*Student absenteeism has dropped 3 to 5 times more than earlier annual decreases.

*Sat scores have increased.

(The above improvements are graphically shown on the attached sheets)

Examples of other positive results:

*Business-education partnerships continue to increase--every school district has designated a coordinator for these partnerships.

*At least 75 (out of 92) districts are using volunteers in a systematic way; volunteer coordinators are in every school district.

*Test scores have increased. In1984-85, the percentage of students meeting the BSAP (Basic Skills Assessment Program) standards showed remarkable improvement at all grade level.

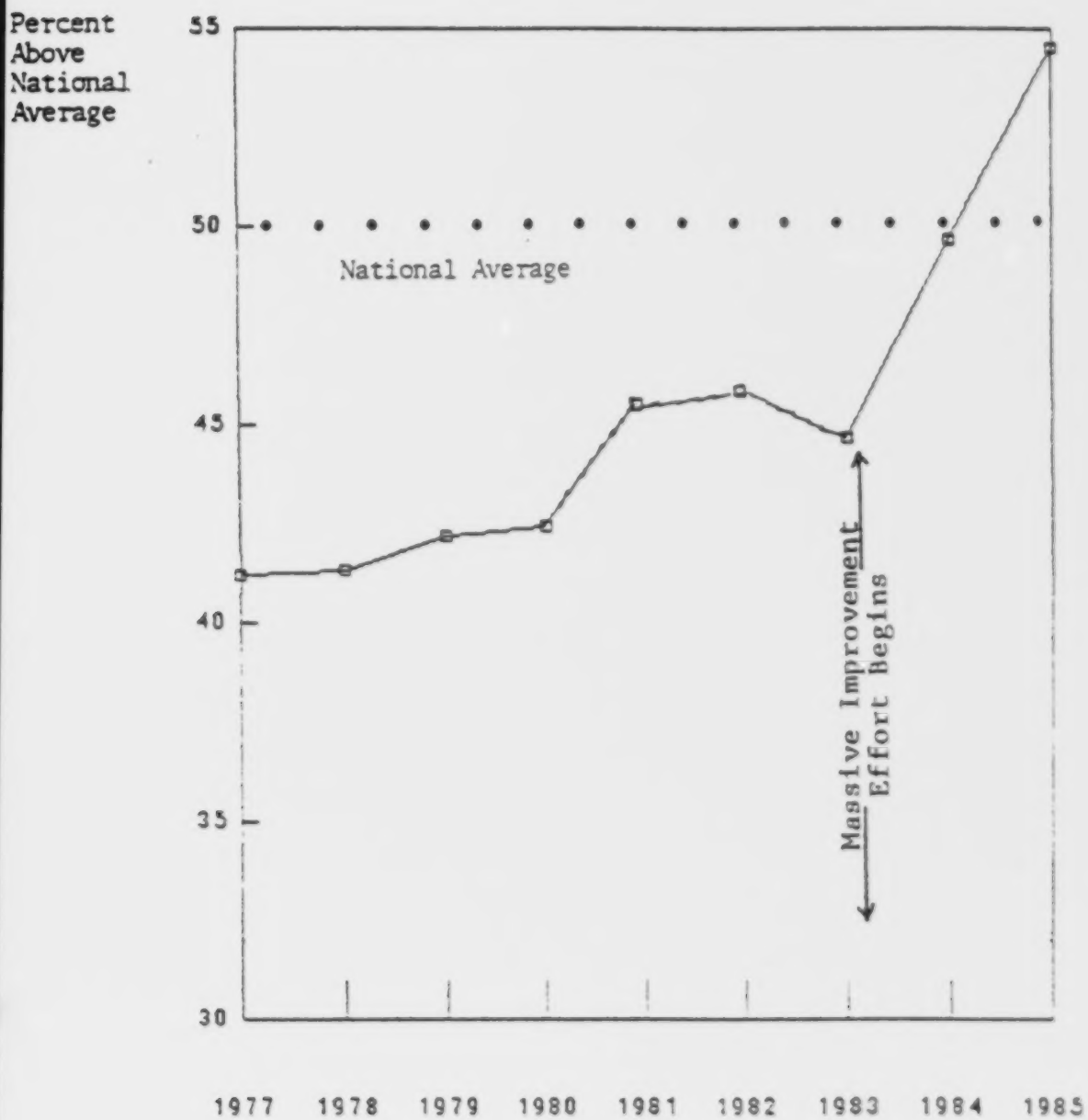
*Student attendance increased significantly last year. Average daily attendance increased about 9, 270 student statewide.

*The number of 4 year olds enrolled in child development centers grew; we expect the number to grow to about 6, 715 this year.

*180,000 students received extra help in basic skills.

S.C. HIGH SCHOOL ACADEMIC SKILLS

VS. NATIONAL AVERAGE



Academic Skills = Social Studies, Science and Reference Skills

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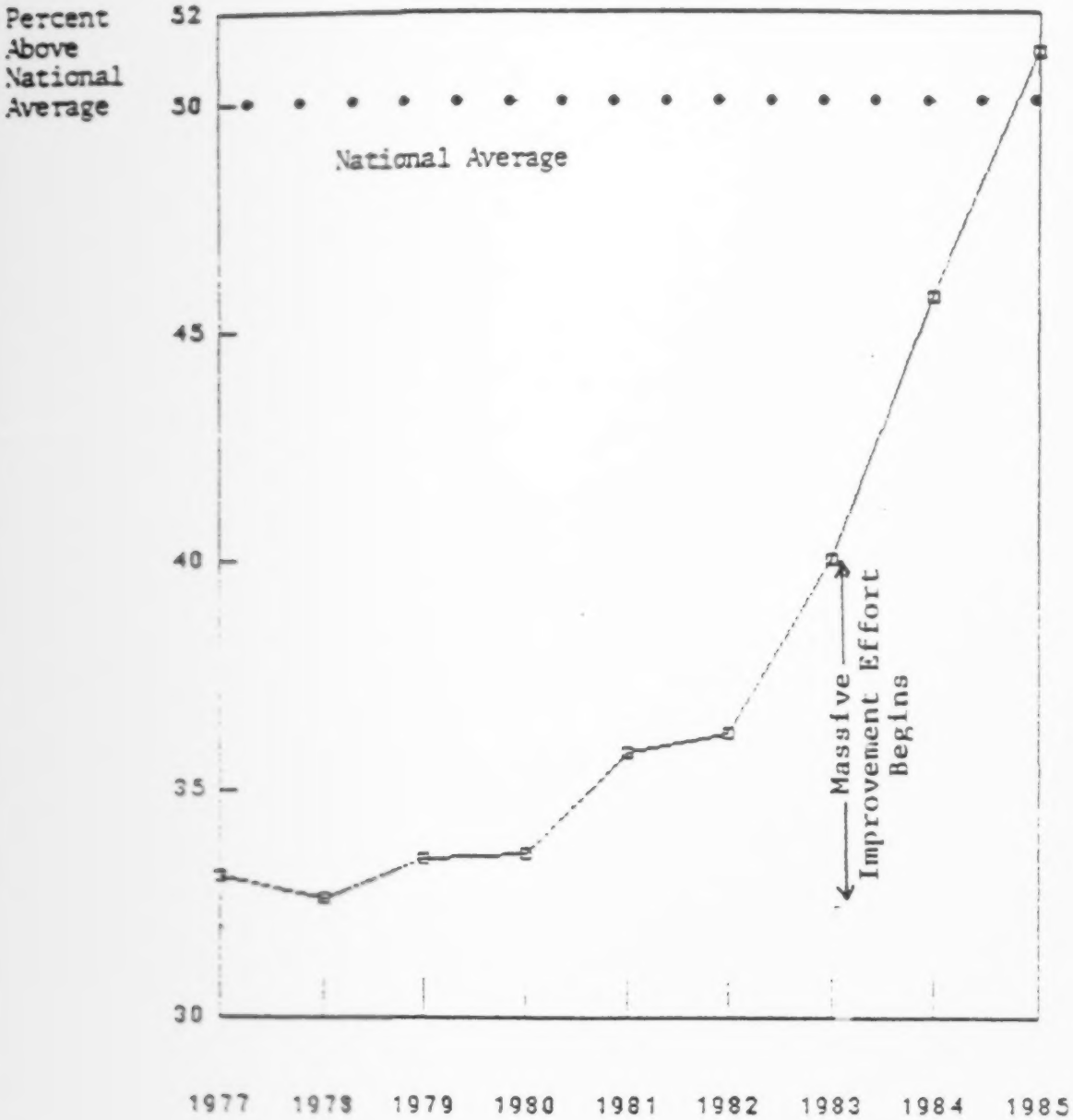
S.C. HIGH SCHOOL BASIC SKILLS

VS. NATIONAL AVERAGE



Basic Skills = Reading, Math and Language Arts

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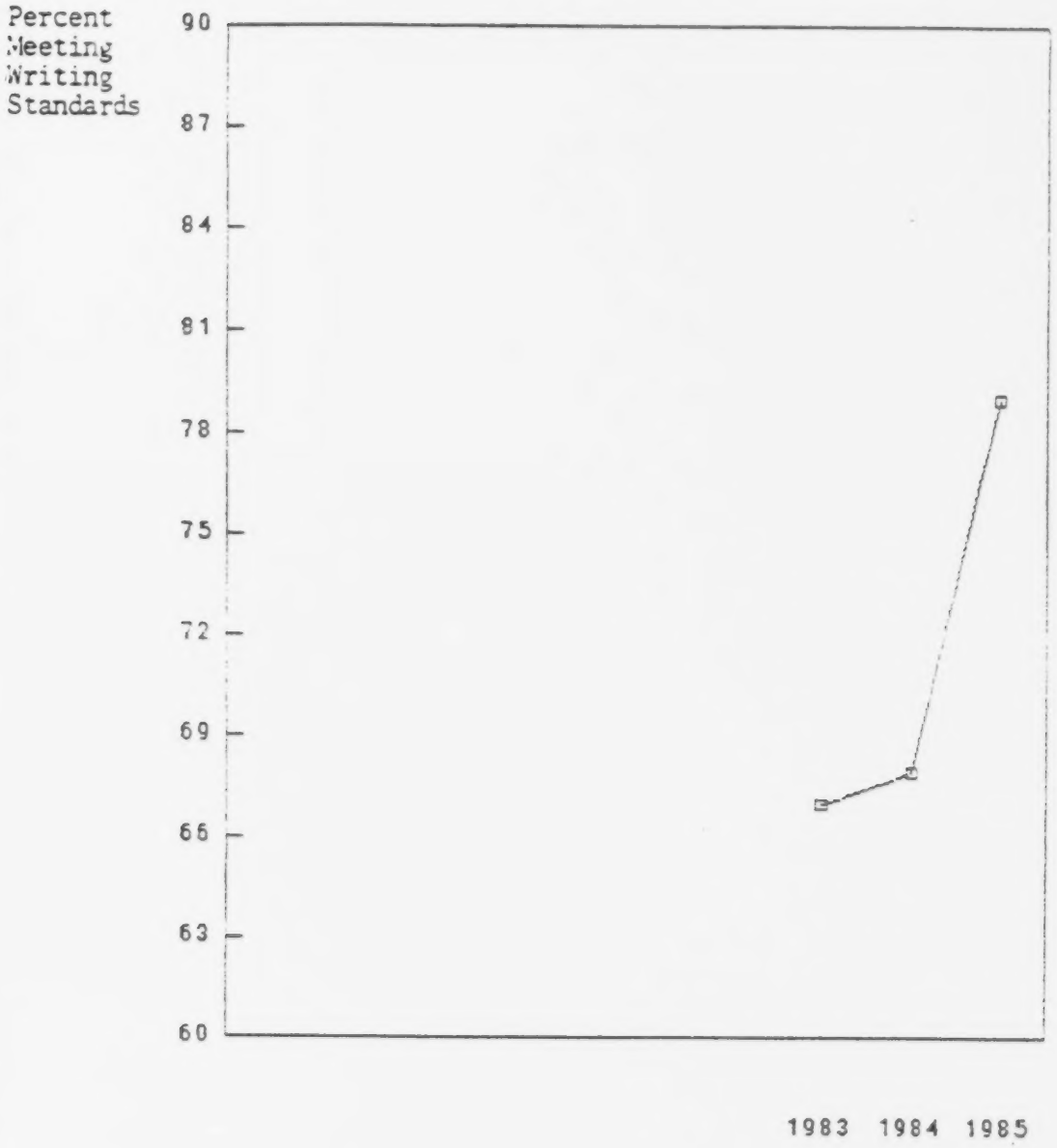
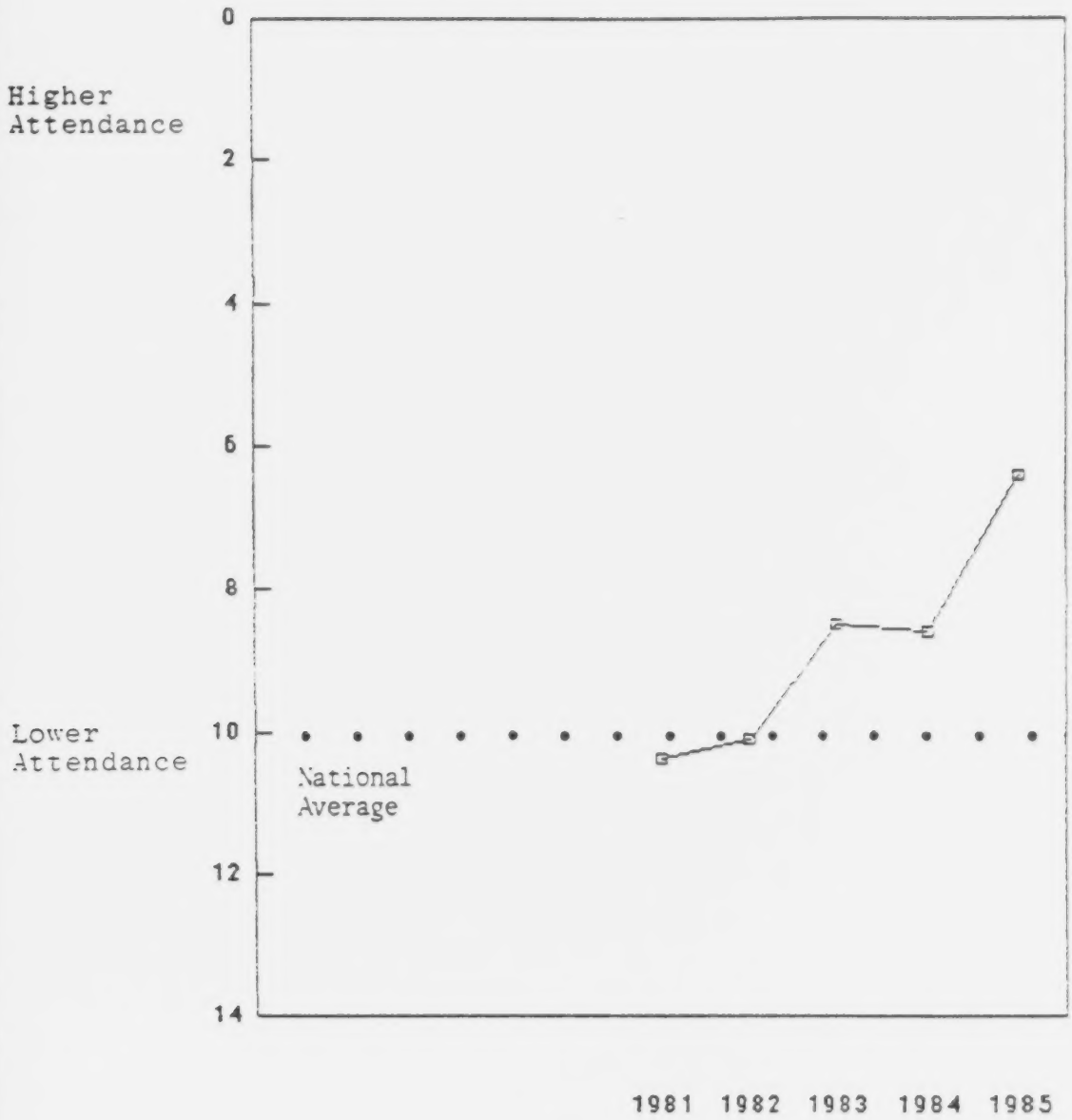
S.C. HIGH SCHOOL WRITING

MEETING MINIMUM STANDARDS



S.C. STUDENT ATTENDANCE



S.C. SAT SCORES